



Guadalupe Workers



January 2017

Over the Christmas Season, when I wasn't confined to my classroom most hours of the day, and I was occasionally able to get to the Domino's chapel for daily Mass, I saw people I hadn't seen in a while, allowing me to engage in "catch-up" conversations. I was a little surprised to learn from these conversations how many people still don't quite understand what Guadalupe Workers does. They know that we help mothers in Detroit, yes; however, they don't understand the role or importance of our presence at the abortion clinics. Certainly in the monthly letters I've talked about it. For many, though, the importance of our sidewalk counseling is not registering. If I were to venture a guess as to why our help to the mothers is understood, but the sidewalk counseling not, it would be because the material assistance is a generally recognized and approved corporal work of mercy, while the sidewalk counseling is... what?

Maybe it's some sort of spiritual work of mercy, you guess; and I would agree. The spiritual works,

though, don't have the same status in awareness as that of the corporal works. After all, they're spiritual. They can't be seen, counted, measured, graphed—all of which, certainly, are the characteristics that our world expects in any work.

Slowly but surely, history has been closing the shutters. Slowly but surely, history has been sealing off all visual access to the realms beyond time and space. We used to build great cathedrals, which were like elevators to heaven; now we build low, functional units with gathering spaces. We used to read literature telling the story of man's desire for God; now we read texts and posts. We used to use numbers as images of perfection and harmony; now we use them to calculate slope (who cares?!).

What we want is that which is useful, because that which is useful gives us more product—which product, in turn, becomes useful to create more product, and on and on we go. I as a teacher, then, will finally be judged by my productivity; and my productivity will be judged when my students



"Pro-Choice" escorts outside of Summit clinic.

Where are the Pro-Lifers?

are plugged into standardized tests, the results of which will display certain desirable or not-so-desirable numbers.

Even the best of us succumb to the influences of history. Even those who believe in the spiritual reality of a Triune God and in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, even those will expect more results from Trump than they do from God.

The Guadalupe Workers, however, are still insisting on the primacy of a spiritual work of mercy, one called sidewalk counseling. (If you're wondering which spiritual work of mercy is carried out in...



Catesa, one of our mothers, sidewalk counseling

Cont.

sidewalk counseling, I'd say all seven, but I won't go into that now.) No matter how much the Workers might spend in helping mothers obtain housing, or food, or heat, or running water, those corporal acts lose their heart if they are divorced from the fundamental affirmation, which must precede each. We help because we affirm. We affirm the individual, unrepeatable dignity of mother and child—a dignity most directly assaulted, for both mother and child, at the abortion mill. Cursed is the fruit of your womb, says the man with the scalpel.

We are at the abortion clinic, then, at least once a week. Sometimes we are opposed by “pro-choice escorts,” sometimes not. Either way, we strive to be a presence—because, ultimately, God Himself is eternal presence, a beauty which need not justify itself, prove itself, but only Be. If, finally, we can do nothing else for the child or mother, we can at least say, yes, you are, and you are good. This is the affirmation at the heart of a work, which has saved hundreds from abortion's destruction.



Other Matters

The sidewalk counseling is the heart of our work, but is not the extent of our work. Every now and then there is a mother who, in the last critical moments, refuses to give up on herself or on what she has created. Some of those mothers simply smile and leave. Others ask for our help. Recently, for example, we met an African woman who, while supporting herself with a part-time job at Menards, also sends money to her family in Africa. In the final moments of our meeting, we were only a few feet from the door of Summit; it seemed she was going to enter, but she cried and admitted she did not want to kill her child. Finally, Alicia said, “Come on, let's go to breakfast,” and she did. Later in the day we helped her to purchase winter clothes and groceries, and set up a plan for ongoing assistance with rent.

We also continue to present our monthly talks at our Detroit office. The mothers and a few dads come to hear the speaker, while the kids go with high school volunteers for games and crafts. Yesterday was a smaller event—only about 10 adults and 30 children—but I think everyone enjoyed the smaller group, for it allowed more real conversation. An event, which by the schedule, should have lasted only a couple of hours, went on for at least 4. For the Guadalupe Workers, who were at the abortion clinic in the morning, it was a 10-hour day in Detroit. Thank you to Janna Schoenle, for presenting the talk, and to the volunteers from Father Gabriel Richard High School and Saint Catherine Academy.

*Please send all correspondence
and/or support for the Guadalupe
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